



Prepared Remarks

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Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

**House-Senate Conference Committee on the
The Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013 (HR.2642)**
October 30, 2013

Mr. Chairman, let me begin by commending the members of the Senate and the House for having completed the consideration of these bills. The prospects for passage of the legislation are within reach. All members of the conference and all members of the Agriculture Committees of the House and the Senate deserve our sincere congratulations for this accomplishment.

The time to complete our work has come. The farm bill expired on September 30th, so it is important that we reach a consensus and craft a conference report that will pass both the House and the Senate as soon as possible.

Over the past two years, much has been made of the differences in the Senate and House bills:

In the Commodity Title, the question has been how to deal with the variety of crops produced in different regions and provide a real safety net for all of our nation's farmers when prices decline.

In the Nutrition Title, we need to ensure that waste, fraud and abuse reforms are given the serious attention they deserve while at the same time providing an appropriate safety net for the families affected by economic hardship. There is no reason we cannot make commonsense reforms to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, while still providing assistance to families in need.

The conference committee also has to decide how to handle several provisions that help cut through bureaucratic red tape and lighten the regulatory burdens that many farmers and ranchers face. The House included a number of these provisions, while the Senate did not.

Despite these differences, our bills are similar in many ways. The Conservation Title, for example, is substantially the same in both the House and Senate bills. We've protected programs that work well to ensure the good health of our nation's land and waters, including the Conservation Reserve Program, the Wetlands Reserve Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Farm bills always reflect the times in which they are drafted. Members of the Senate and the House believe that the farm bill can help reduce costs which will strengthen the federal budget situation. Both bills recommend significant, although different, levels of savings. We have an opportunity to demonstrate to the American people that their government can achieve savings, and at the same time, meet the agricultural, nutrition and conservation needs of the country.

Crop insurance has become an increasingly large part of the safety net for producers. Both bodies have worked to ensure that they provide effective risk management tools are provided. As we consider a final version of the Crop Insurance Title, I'm sure that we'll be reminded of the many similarities between the Senate and House bills, and resolve our differences.

As we complete our work on the final agreement for all 12 titles of the farm bill, we should keep in mind all of those who rely on the programs contained in this legislation. Inaction on our part will result in more problems like those recently witnessed when the Livestock Indemnity Program was not available to help when disaster struck cattle producers in states like Nebraska and the Dakotas.

The agriculture community and our economy need the certainty that a five-year farm bill provides. The programs included in the farm bill affect real people every day: farmers, ranchers, and small businesses, as well as millions of children, mothers, and fathers will all be influenced by the decisions we make.

Now is the time to act to complete work on this legislation.

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